



KNOW YOUR ROOTS

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GRANDMAMA SLEEPS

The newsletters this year have been summarizing many of the grandmothers in our ancestral tree. This grandmother, Josephine Wiggenhorn, is one of the first from the very first Kuhnert-Wiggenhorn newsletter in 1996.

Josephine was an extraordinary woman. Not only did she accompany her husband Wilhelm on his journey to the United States, but she packed up her eight children and ended up running one of the most prestigious German hotels in the little town of Watertown, Wisconsin. One of these daughters is our direct link to Josephine.



This picture is the hotel purchased by Wilhelm Wiggenhorn. The following are two accounts of Josephine, the first being about her Golden Wedding and the second being about her death. I hope you enjoy both

of them and realize what a strong impact our grandmother made on the little town of Watertown.

“On September 6, 1871 Wilhelm and Josephine celebrated their golden wedding with their surviving seven children. Wilhelmina (ed. our link) had died just shortly before the same year.”

This was a portion of a much larger story in the Watertown Republican.

A Golden Wedding—The rare and beautiful incident of a Golden Wedding took place in this city on Monday the 4th of September, 1871. The parties were Mr. WILLIAM and Mrs. JOSEPHINE WIGGENHORN, and the last ceremony was celebrated at St. Henri's Church, in the presence of seven surviving children and thirty-nine grand children. The festivities were observed at the residence of EUGENE WIGGENHORN, in the First Ward. The first marriage was solemnized in the Kingdom of Westphalia, in 1821, just fifty years ago, and the second in the State of Wisconsin—which then had no name on the map, as Westphalia has none now. One State has disappeared from the political world, and the other has arisen to be a great and flourishing commonwealth—the adopted home of the venerable couple and their descendants.

The following account is excerpted from the WATERTOWN REPUBLICAN in Watertown, Wisconsin of September 5, 1874. It is very interesting inasmuch as it chronicles the life of one of our ancestors.

NEARLY A CENTENARIAN

Tuesday morning, September 4, 1894 at 3 o'clock, Mrs. Josephine Wiggerhorn passed away at her home age 96 years, 5 months and 24 days. Thus is recorded the death of one of Watertown's celebrated residents and perhaps the oldest inhabitant of these parts.

She has been a wonderfully well preserved specimen of her race possessing all her faculties up to the time of death to a surprising degree for one at that extreme age, and although she has been for about two years confined to her bed, it has only been from feebleness and not from any known disease.

One of the proudest realizations of this historical lady's life, among all the noted happenings within her time, must be the knowledge that she has reared to a noble manhood and womanhood a large family of children who are useful,

respected and influential factors in their respective communities.

THE REPUBLICAN in a past birthday celebration spoke of her eventful life. "It is rather bewildering to look back over the period Mrs. Wiggerhorn has lived. John Adams had just entered the second year of his administration when she first saw the light, and Washington was yet living. It was only two years before her birth that the great Napoleon Bonaparte first came into notice by his conquests in Italy and at the time of his disastrous retreat from Moscow she was a miss of 14 years; while three years later, when he was vanquished at Waterloo, she was on the verge of young womanhood. She has been contemporary with Goethe, Schiller, the two Humboldts, Karl Wilhelm and other great men, and Bismarck was not born for fifteen years after her birth. We shall not attempt to enumerate the changes she has witnessed both in her native land and in her adopted country during her time."

The account is a translation from the German Newspaper.

These accounts were sent to me by Charles Wallman of Watertown. His help was indescribable in aiding me unveil the mystery of the Wiggerhorns. Josephine, I learned, came from a very well educated family and because of her background she entertained many of the German intellectuals of the day residing in the United States. In fact, I believe this is how Charles Kuhnert came to know and marry her daughter Willhelmina. He was also from a well known German family and because of Josephine's hotel reputation of hosting the well known German thinkers, he must have paid them a visit and fell in love with their daughter who became our link to this family. So to Josephine I say thank you for being a part of our heritage.

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